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PROGRAM NPACT Special STATION WETA TV
PBS Network

DATE December 23, 1975 9:00 PM CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT ~~Full Text~~ A View From the Gallery (Praetorian Guard)
with Paul Duke

ANNOUNCER: From Washington, an NPACT special, "A View from the Gallery: An Assessment of the Congressional Investigation of the CIA and the FBI."

Now, here is NPACT correspondent Jim Lehrer.

JIM LEHRER: Good evening. We've turned on the TV lights again tonight here in the Senate Caucus Room of the Old Senate Office Building, a room that has become as familiar in the last two years as just about any in Washington. For it has been here, under these lights, that the darker side of our government has been shown to us. First there were the months of Watergate, which later led to the resignation of a President. And now, just completed, the hearings of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

Off and on during the last four months, witnesses have sat at this witness table and told of things that we thought existed only in the minds of spy novelists or crackpots. The senators, up here, led by Democrat Frank Church of Idaho and Republican John Tower of Texas, asked questions about and expressed shock and disbelief at what they heard.

Tonight, we're going to forego further expression of shock and disbelief, and attempt to put this past year of investigations and revelations into the light of perspective. This will include not only what we've heard from this committee, but also from a House investigative committee headed by New York Congressman Otis Pike.

There has been too much, obviously, to crowd into an hour, so we've had to be selective. We're going to deal exclu-

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sively with the nation's two major intelligence organizations, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. But even with them, we're going to have leave out some things.

We have brought back into this room some of Washington's top reporters, who spent many hours at these press tables observing the Senate committee's work. But even before this investigation got underway, they were covering this story. And they and Paul Duke and I will tell you what happened tonight, and, hopefully, why it happened and who was responsible.

PAUL DUKE: We always knew that spying was a dirty business, but we never knew just how dirty until The New York Times broke the story a year ago about CIA operations in this country, operations that were not sanctioned by law, that went far beyond the agency's basic charter.

The subsequent investigations have told us a great deal: that the CIA did spy on innocent Americans, it did illegally tap telephones, it did make unlawful break-ins; and overseas, the CIA was implicated in assassination plots and did wage war.

In all of this, the agency did many things public opinion would never have supported. It did these things because it operated in secret, and it also did them because of a conviction that it was serving the national interest.

The CIA view that it could do largely as it pleased was dramatically exposed early in the Senate hearings when the agency's onetime chief counterspy, James Angleton, testified about the opening of American mail.

SENATOR WALTER MONDALE: What was your understanding of the legality of the covert mail operation?

JAMES ANGLETON: That it was illegal.

SENATOR MONDALE: What?

ANGLETON: That it was illegal. .

SENATOR MONDALE: How do you rationalize conducting a program which you believed to be illegal?

ANGLETON: From the counterintelligence point of view, we believed that it was extremely important to know everything possible regarding contacts of American citizens with Communist countries. And, second, that we believed that the security of the operation was such that the Soviets were unaware of such a program; and, therefore, that many of the interests that the Soviets would have in the United States, subversive and otherwise, would be through the open mails, when their own adjudication was

that the mails were -- could not be violated.

SENATOR MONDALE: So that a judgment was made, with which you concurred, that although covert mail openings were illegal, the good that flowed from it, in terms of anticipating threats to this country, through the use of this counterintelligence technique, made it worthwhile nevertheless.

ANGLETON: That is correct.

DUKE: This attitude, that the law did not always apply to the CIA, led the agency into many questionable activities, even though Congress, in creating the agency in 1947, clearly said it was to have no police or internal security functions.

To the public, the CIA was a world of super-secret spying for finding out what the enemy was up to. Not many people cared or asked what the CIA was up to. But now we know the unthinkable became the thinkable, as the agency moved more and more down a bizarre trail of death-dealing dart guns and exotic poisons.

There were days, in fact, when the Senate hearings turned into a kind of James Bond theater on the art of snooper.

SENATOR FRANK CHURCH: Does this pistol fire the dart?

DIRECTOR WILLIAM COLBY: Yes, it does, Mr. Chairman. The round thing at the top is obviously the sight. The rest of it is what is practically a normal .45, although it's special. However, it works by electricity. There is a battery in the handle, and it fires a small dart.

SENATOR CHURCH: So that when it fires, it fires silently?

DIRECTOR COLBY: Almost silently, yes.

SENATOR HOWARD BAKER: Looking at your previous executive session testimony, apparently you developed for them a fountain pen. What did the fountain pen do?

CHARLES SENSENY: The fountain pen was a var -- it was a variation of an M-1. An M-1, in itself, was a system, and it could be fired from anything. It could be put into a.

SENATOR BAKER: Did it fire a dart, or an aerosol, or what?

SENSENY: It was a dart.

SENATOR BAKER: It fired a dart.

A starter -- were you talking about a fluorescent light

starter?

SENSENY: That's correct.

SENATOR BAKER: What did it do?

SENSENY: It put up an aerosol in a room when you put the switch on.

SENATOR BAKER: What did that aerosol do?

SENSENY: It would contaminate anybody in the room.

SENATOR BAKER: Okay. What about a cane, a walking cane?

SENSENY: Yes, an M-1 projectile could be fired from a cane; also an umbrella.

DUKE: In truth, we never had a full-fledged spying operation in this country until World War II. There was a celebrated comment by War Secretary Henry Stimson, who once said, "Gentlemen just don't open other gentlemen's mail."

And, Stanley Karnow, you've been a foreign correspondent, you're a syndicated columnist now, and you're also a noted authority on the affairs of the CIA. How is it that we started down this long trail?

STANLEY KARNOW: Well, it's true that the war did change, the Second World War did change people's attitudes and it changed attitudes within the government. And I think it's interesting to look at the personalities of some of these men who emerged as senior CIA officials.

In one respect, they considered themselves to be blue-blood Americans. They'd gone to very exclusive prep schools, Ivy League colleges, and they saw themselves as a special breed. And during the Second World War, many of them served in the Office of Strategic Services, which was the precursor to the CIA, which was an eccentric, romantic, covert operation; and here, their notion of themselves as a special breed was further encouraged.

Now, when the war ended, many of them had to go back to the routine of peacetime life, and it was a bit boring. Can you imagine going back to a lawyer's office or being a bond salesman when, during the war, you'd been parachuting into Yugoslavia or occupied France?

So, when the cold war came along, this was an opportunity for many of these men to relive the exciting years of the Second World War and to use some of the same techniques that they

had used during the Second World War. So, in a sense, it was a continuation of the war for them, and they began to argue, "All's fair in war, so, therefore, let's behave the way we did during the Second World War." And this inevitably led to assassination plots and the like.

DUKE: Was the development of these exotic weapons also a natural consequence?

KARNOW: Well, advanced technology came along to increase the romanticism of it. James Bond was fiction, but these men were living in real life. And eventually, in my opinion, they began to look like kids with deadly toys.

So, it was the spirit of adventure combined with advanced technology.

DUKE: So, as we see, the romanticism soon found a new outlet in realtion, a cold war reality. And for the CIA, this meant action to stop Communist advances in Europe and elsewhere.

After the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948, Washington was frantic about a similar threat to Italy. So the CIA poured in money to try to influence the Italian elections.

More money was used in France to ward off gains by Communist labor unions.

And agents began moving into Eastern Europe to try to foment trouble for the Russian satellite countries.

But the first great CIA triumph came in Iran in 1953. Here, in a masterpiece of clandestine skill, the agency maneuvered successfully to overthrow a rebel regime and to return the Shah to power. For CIA leaders, this was proof that they could handle events in many other countries as well.

John Steele, you were, during this period, during the early 1950s, you were a magazine reporter and you were on intimate terms with many of the CIA leaders of that day. Was Iran the great jumping-off point?

JOHN STEELE: I think not, Paul. Iran was a page, but not really the beginning in the story of CIA's covert operations, in a modern sense. I think in 1947, when the newly-established National Security Council issued its very first top secret order, it all began. The order told the Central Intelligence Agency to launch covert operations against what was then called International Communism, including, but not limited to, such action as sabotage, demolition, aid to resistance groups. And in the intervening years, covert actions were really pursued relentlessly and, for a long time, with an urgency dictated by cold war tensions and other

tensions, really, with implacable foes.

Most particularly, this was so when for eight years the CIA was run by the late Allen Dulles, a rumpled bear of man, usually surrounded in pipe smoke, with a lifetime of intelligence experience and an unbridled gusto. Few risks were too great for Allen Dulles and few challenges were too stern for his CIA.

But the U.S., it has to be remembered, had no monopoly on this playing board. It girdled the entire globe. All of the great powers, and many of the small powers as well, were playing out a deadly game in the dangerous back alleys of the world.

There were successes: in Iran, as you mentioned; in ousting a Communist-dominated government in Greece; in Guatemala and elsewhere.

The CIA once dug a tunnel, for instance, from West Berlin to East Berlin, and through it tapped Soviet communications, until one day East Berlin street workers repairing the street hit a soft spot and the thing collapsed.

And from high-flying U-2 aircraft, armed only with reconnaissance cameras, CIA pilots audited Soviet nuclear progress, until Francis Gary Powers was shot down in 1960.

I think John Kennedy was right when he told the CIA in 1961 that "your successes are unheralded; your failures are trumpeted."

DUKE: Well, John, given this background, it's hardly surprising that the CIA became more aggressive and more ambitious in its projects. In the past 28 years, the agency has engaged in subversive activity; that is, it has actively tried to influence events in no fewer than 30 countries.

The ultimate climax was U.S. involvement in plots to assassinate foreign leaders. As the Senate committee reported, American officials were implicated in three political assassinations: President Trujillo in the Dominican Republic in 1961, President Diem in South Vietnam in 1963, and General Rene Schneider in Chile in 1970. In two cases, the CIA directly tried to kill foreign leaders: Patrice Lumumba of the Congo in 1960 and Fidel Castro of Cuba between 1960 and 1965. There were at least eight attempts against Castro's life, all designed to prevent Communism from gaining a toehold on our Latin doorstep.

Likewise, this was the reason the CIA tried to prevent Salvador Allende from taking power in Chile, pouring in money to help Allende's opponents, and contributing the turmoil that made it difficult for Allende to govern.

Here, as in everything else, the end seemed to justify the means; so there was no hesitancy about recruiting gangsters to try to kill Castro. But as Senator Mondale remarked, it all proved Americans were just not very good at the assassination business.

SENATOR MONDALE: It seems to me the record shows, over many, many years and under Administrations of both political parties, an incredible naivete about the capacity of American society to control and dictate the course of another society through such things as an assassination, a few guns, a few dollars, or a few lives. None of it worked, and all of it assumed that other societies were capable of being moved around and dictated and directed by our society in a way that we would never accept in terms of outside direction of our own society.

DUKE: Nicholas Horrock, as investigative reporter for The New York Times, you have spent many, many months in this committee room, covering these proceedings, as well as on the House side. How would you assess the findings relating to the political assassinations?

NICHOLAS HORROCK: I tend to a little bit disagree with Mr. Mondale. The policy was naive, but I think what the committee found was that we had learned a lot of very efficient techniques. And they did a good job, and I understand their final report will have in it information, which we had not known about, about our success on a below-the-foreign-leader basis. In other words, in the Phoenix Program in Vietnam, or the famous Green Beret case, we killed people; we learned the techniques almost as well as the Russians, or maybe better.

So I think that it's wrong to say that the CIA was bumbling or fumbling in this thing. But the policy was misdirected, coming back a great deal, by the way, to what Stan was saying earlier. We had a notion that wherever there were countries we were dealing in, there was a rude group of people willing to come to our aid, people to whom you could give money and they would overthrow a government for you. It was a World War II concept of a freedom fighter someplace that you could find. And it just simply, again and again, hasn't proved out.

Now, on the House side, they got into a very intriguing aspect of CIA efficiency on the question of how good they are on simply intelligence gathering. They spend upwards of 4 1/2 billion dollars, somewhere in that range, to 5 gathering intelligence. And in several cases, they don't predict very well. We know that now in the Israeli situation. We know in Vietnam their force levels, of the intelligence community, were lower than the North Vietnamese had there. And I think that not enough attention was given to Mr. Pike's investigation in that range. I think that we should have paid some attention, and I hope that whatever oversight